

## Praying for Open Doors, Words, Clarity & Boldness

by

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**Colossians 4:2-4** (NASB95) Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; {3} praying at the same time for us as well, *that God will open up to us a door for the word*, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; {4} *that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak*.<sup>1</sup>

**Ephesians 6:18-20** (NASB95) With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, {19} and pray on my behalf, *that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth*, to make known *with boldness* the mystery of the Gospel, {20} for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may *speak boldly*, as I ought to speak.

The letters of Colossians and Ephesians are often called the “twin epistles” because the Apostle Paul conveys much of the same themes through these letters. For example, in chapter four of Colossians and chapter six of Ephesians, Paul urges his fellow Christians to pray. He then, in both letters, asked them to pray four specific prayers in regard to proclaiming the Gospel.

In Colossians 2:2, he *commands* the Christians in Colossae and Laodicea to devote themselves “to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.” The phrase “keeping alert” literally means to stay awake in prayer, while praying “with an attitude of thanksgiving” is a ready antidote to prayer becoming a drudgery.

In Ephesians 6:18, he urges the Christians in Ephesus to pray “with all prayer and petition at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” Paul uses the word “all” four times in this one verse: *all* prayer and petition, at *all* times, with *all* perseverance and petition, for *all* the saints. Again, as in Colossians, Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to keep alert, staying awake in their prayers.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise specified all Scripture is taken from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Emphasis added through the use of italic font.

He also asserts they are to pray at all times “in the Spirit,” a phrase which can be translated “by the Spirit.” I have long asked God to teach me to pray “by the Spirit at all times.” When we see prayer only as intercessory prayer, attempting to pray at all times, it soon becomes a struggle; when we see prayer as a loving conversation with the Holy Spirit who directs our prayers, prayer becomes part of our intimate friendship with the Spirit. These two verses in Colossians and Ephesians are well worth pondering!

Paul also, in each letter, asks the Christians to whom he is writing to pray for him and his fellow apostles. First, in Colossians 4:3, he asks for them to pray “*that God will open up to us a door for the word.*” I like the way the New Century Version translates this clause, “*that God will give us an opportunity to tell people his message,*”<sup>2</sup> or the way the New Living Translation renders the phrase, “*that God will give us many opportunities.*”<sup>3</sup> The sense of this is that God would cause doors to open for the proclamation of His word! We, too, can pray “*that God will open up to us a door for the word,*” or again, “*that God will grant us many opportunities to tell people his message.*” I have made the prayer even more concise by praying for *open doors* or *opportunities*.

Second, in Colossians 4:4, Paul asks the Colossian and Laodicean Christians to pray that he would “*make it clear in the way I ought to speak.*” Paul is asking them to pray that he might proclaim the Gospel with clarity—to make it understandable! We can also pray this same prayer! As with praying for opportunities, I also have shortened this to *praying for clarity*.

Third, in Ephesians 6:19, Paul asks the Ephesian Christians to pray for him individually, “*that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth.*” The word *utterance* is somewhat an archaic word now. The word translated as *utterance* in the New American Standard Bible is literally the word *logos* (λόγος). So, Paul is asking these Christians to pray that God will give him *words*—meaning that God will provide him with *what to say*. The New Living Translation offers the sense of this word as: “Ask God to give me the *right words.*”<sup>4</sup> So, as in Colossians, here is another prayer that we can add to our prayer arsenal, “*give me words or utterance.*” Please give me the *right words*! Please give me *what to say*!

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<sup>2</sup> *The Everyday Bible: New Century Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

<sup>3</sup> *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Fourth, Paul asks his fellow Christians to pray that in proclaiming the Gospel, he “may *speak boldly*.” Hence, as with the other three prayers, we can ask God to give us *boldness* in sharing the Gospel! Many Christians with whom I have spoken are timid about sharing the faith; they are frightened to share the Gospel. I fully understand! I, too, have been timid in my life—not ashamed of the Gospel—but ashamed of myself and my timidity. But I have learned to ask for boldness, and I have seen God answering by giving me boldness—where I had none—on many occasions!

Putting these four prayers together, I find the following four petitions to pray: to ask for opportunities, clarity, words, and boldness. Arranging these in a more logical order, I pray for opportunities, words, clarity, and boldness. The Apostle Paul had asked his fellow Christians to pray for these very things on his behalf. In that the Holy Spirit God-breathed these petitions through Paul, they are also highly applicable to us!

I have prayed these four prayers for many years now. I have seen God answer them frequently! A couple of years ago, after meeting with a group of men for Bible Study at Red Robin, I went to the mall to walk the inside perimeter. I sat in my car before entering and prayed, “God, please open opportunities for me as I walk, giving me words to speak with clarity and give me boldness.” I went into the mall through the Barnes & Noble entrance and then began walking counterclockwise around the mall. Before getting halfway around, I saw a man sitting on one of the benches looking dejected. I said hello to him and asked him how he was doing. Then God opened the door! In our conversation, this man shared that he doubted his salvation. God gave me words to encourage him, to reassure him with clarity—and He filled me with a joyous boldness! I gave him a Gospel of John, encouraging him to read it. He thanked me for stopping to talk to him.

I then continued my way around the mall. Within a few hundred feet, I drew near to a woman who had a white terry cloth cap covering her bald head. She, too, was resting on one of the benches. I asked her, “Are you fighting cancer?” She looked at me as if it was one of the most stupid questions until I said to her, “I was just recently diagnosed with stage four cancer.” Again, God opened the door. He prompted me to tell her some of my own story and where I have found peace. I discovered that she was an adherent of a

universalist faith. I asked her if I could pray for her, to which she consented. I continue to pray for her!

Near the end of the first lap, I met another woman who was walking my way. She asked me if I was here to walk around the mall. I said yes. I then told her that as I walked, I prayed for the prosperity of the various businesses in the mall. I found out that she, too, is a Christian—and we ended up encouraging each other.

More recently, while attending an evangelism seminar on ZOOM, two young Mormon women came to my door. I stood up, quickly praying for opportunity, words, clarity, and boldness. After opening the door and introducing myself, the Holy Spirit poured out the message of God's love for them. He gave me clear words to speak boldly. I did not bash or warn them; God directed me to tell them how much He loves them! After our conversation, as they went away, I sensed that God had spoken to both—the lead woman shaken, but the apprentice deeply moved. I found it humorous that instead of listening to a seminar on evangelism, God allowed me to see Him use me to convey the message of His grace and love to two young women at my door!

This last summer, I was hospitalized with pulmonary embolisms (blood clots) across my lungs. The embolisms likely were caused by my advanced cancer. The night my wife Nancy took me to the emergency room, when the doctor discovered the embolisms, I prayed those four prayers. God opened opportunities for me with everyone who came into the various rooms I found myself in over the next two days. He gave me the right words to say with clarity and boldness! I was astounded by how He opened spiritual conversations--sometimes sharing my story, other times lending a listening ear, and other times encouraging with scripture and prayer!

The Holy Spirit has given us four simple things for which to pray in the letters of Colossians and Ephesians: opportunity, words, clarity, and boldness. I encourage you to read through Colossians 4:2-4 and Ephesians 6:18-20, to ponder them and meditate upon these prayers that readily lend themselves to evangelism, to sharing the Promise of Life with those around us! I pray that you will weave these prayers into the cadence of your daily life!

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